826 is also through the feet that a part of man's strength is deposited in the sweepings and rubbish upon which he treads. Their role as receptacles appears in the rituals concerning household refuse and the dirt on roads and paths.

Like the little finger, the small toe symbolizes the whole person. [301] It is sometimes adorned with a silver ring, symbol of the word, which recalls that man's body is the seat of the word extended within him from head to feet (1).

1. In olden times the ring on the small toe was made of red nyama fiber (nyama fu), which played the same role as metal.

831 The notion of the bisexuality of human beings is fundamental:
826 the spiritual principles are sexed like the body, whose ambivalence /71/ is evident during childhood: the boy is feminine in his foreskin; the girl is masculine in her clitoris. One of the aims of circumcision [304] and excision is to help the child attain the sex to which it is apparently destined by removing the organ of the opposite sex. (2). But the

[171] 2. The same conception is found among the Dogon; see M. Griaule, Dieu d'eau, p. 185.

initial duality of the soul and body is the very foundation of the human being. He is complete only if he originally received it, and he retains it even after the operation imposed by physical and social life, [774] for the soul of the opposite sex, though diminished in the body, remains present in the shadow, the dya. He also rediscovers his dual unity when he marries. A married couple are a unit for their dya [581] join as do their bodies in an act which is not merely physical and which realizes the ideal union of twins.

831 The sex to which one belongs dominates one's whole existence on
801 earth. Objects and tools bear masculine or feminine marks, according to the rules of the division of labor. The numbers three (man) and four (woman) are abridged forms of the sex. "Primitive men" who, according to the Bambara expressed themselves mostly by gestures and signs, engraved their rare objects with the number of

3. The Family Community or the Family

Conjugal Union (furu)

581 One of the most essential elements of the community based on descent is legitimacy, and one of its sources is in the lawful conjugal union which we call marriage. There are other kinds of conjugal union, but none has such definite effects.

Custom as it concerns marriage has its fullest expression at the time of the first marriage, when the spouses are brought under community control. We shall study all the details of custom in such a case, which will facilitate relating it to the various other situations. [195]

I. Marriage

First Marriage

Marriage is the union of two free individuals of the opposite sex for the purpose of founding a family. Certain conditions and formalities are required prior to the union of the spouses.

582 Conditions. Since there is no native institution that enables a Black to know for certain how old he is, there is no definite age requirement, as there is in our legislation. On the other hand, since marriage involves sexual union, capability for this union is theoretically required of the future spouses. Nevertheless, although a male is considered marriageable only if he has reached puberty and is circumcised, a female is often married even before her first menses. Furthermore, there is nothing to prevent the marriage of an old man, however old and decrepit he may be (1).

1. Although we are giving facts here that are not always relevant to the first marriage, we do so in order to avoid having to return to them later on when they will be out of their natural context.

583 Finally, if the union is still in effect at the time of the
768 husband's death, the wife's community theoretically regains authority over her, provided that the bride price is paid back.

These three definite points show that lawful union, or
581 marriage, legally speaking, is essentially a kind of usufruct of the
626 woman to the advantage of the husband, and the price is the bride price. As a result, the woman's community is obliged to see to it that the husband enjoys his rights. Hence, when a wife misbehaves, no matter how, the husband reports it to her community which takes steps to bring the erring girl to terms for fear of having to refund the bride price. On the other hand, the husband is expected to treat his wife in a manner worthy of her, that is, with consideration for her origins, and if he fails to do so, he risks the consequences of breach of the marriage contract.

There are, therefore, reciprocal rights and duties required of the spouses. Based on the marriage contract, these rights and duties are reinforced, completed, or, more generally, influenced by ethics no less than by the feelings of the [207] couple in relation to each other and to their respective communities.

581 This is why a girl from a great house with high standing (1)
562
[554]

1. Thus, in the western Sudan, the daughters of the Massa-si are treated with great deference.

cannot be treated like a common concubine, even though the husband may prefer the concubine to the wife, because the free daughter of a powerful house, richly dowered, is virtually independent in the household. If she is sufficiently well off, she may even live in a house of her own, and since her only obligation is the sexual conjugal duty, she receives her husband as she would a lover.

On the other hand the free woman of modest circumstances and, even more, of lowly birth is her husband's companion in wretchedness. She does all kinds of work, even the hardest and most disagreeable, and she desires no rupture that would deprive her of the only affection that sustains her, the love of her children.

562 Between the omnipotence of the first and the humble
581 lot of the second there is every possible gradation. This is all
595 the more true in that, thanks to polygamy, lawful households may be found in association with the free unions and concubinage desired by the husband, in such a way that the position of each person in the family, already affected by all these contingencies, is, in the last analysis, dominated by the absolute authority of the fa. We shall see this clearly in connection with filiation, and it is no less apparent regarding wives, except for those already described who have sufficient influence and the means to live virtually independent of the rest of the family. Although in fact a wife who was not paid for has no regular position and her children legally do not belong to either of their parents, although a concubine does not even count as a person, according to custom, and her children are their genitor's slaves, merely by the will of the fa either of them may have an enviable pre-eminence in the family, especially envied by the lawful wives.

593 Under these circumstances, it may be admitted that con-
562 jugal duties, obedience, fidelity, and their counterparts, the rights to help and assistance, have nuances that vary from one situation to another. It is true that a wife must obey her husband and that he is allowed to resort to [208] corporal punishment to control her, which he does not fail to use. She is not completely at his mercy, however. For instance, he can require her to live in a given place; nevertheless, if it has been agreed that she is not to leave the tribal territory, and this usually tacitly understood, he may not take her away. He can force her to do household chores, but if she is free, he cannot require her to do servile tasks. In the same way, he cannot rent out her services, put her up as security, or sell her.

837 The duty of reciprocal fidelity is most often very vague.
Admittedly, this is not expected of the husband, and indeed, the wife often encourages his lapses from virtue on the theory that this indulgence will attach him to her. As far as a wife's misbehavior is concerned, a husband does not always give it much importance and is sometimes not at all averse to profiting
[848] from it. If children result from her indiscretions, he is not distressed in the least about accepting or denying them.

621 The cluster of all these villages forms a kafo or kafu (canton) which
631 includes the original family, its oldest neighbors, the inhabitants of other villages, and, finally, the outsiders. All these people acknowledge common interests, and the villages of the same canton send representatives to the assembly which meets at the chief's residence. Thus, the large family grows into a patriarchy to form the dugu (village) and spreads out into a kafu. Sometimes, after these branchings out, certain offshoot communities adopt a special dyamu and other taboos. The new dyamu is joined to the old, and little by little supplants it. The principal characteristics of the mother community exist, to which are added [55] various new traits, but the relationship between the two communities is never extinguished. Inversely, natives even of different races but having the same dyamu consider themselves related, which for them implies respect for the ancestral traditions concerning the cult, the practice of mutual aid, respect for the authority of the fa, who must protect all his relatives no matter how remote the connection, and fidelity to all pacts between the communities. Finally, between individuals of different races, certain dyamu, although dissimilar, are considered equivalent and may be interchanged.

621 b. Alliances. -- The unity of a community is founded not only upon common interests, which we will examine later, but also upon a whole system of alliances.

Monteil distinguishs four types of alliance: the common cult (see the chapter on religion), marriage, the tné, and the oath.

621 Marriage: this is the most common form of alliance. When
● 581 a Bambara seeks an alliance with a family, he gives his daughter in
583 marriage to one of the members of that family, after providing her with a large dowry. Some interesting information on this subject is furnished us by Monteil (1). The alliance between two families

1. Monteil, Les Bambara du Ségou et du Kaarta. Les Empires du Mali [The Bambara of Ségou and Kaarta. The Mali Empires.]

is reinforced still further when they establish the custom of exchanging women. In this way the Soninké family Niakaté allied itself to the

621
581 Koulibali of Ségou, founded Bamako, and changed its name to Niaré
583 in becoming Bambara.

The tné: the taboo concerning an animal or some object.
621 The basis of this alliance is the oath of the fa not to kill or eat the
784 object of the taboo. All the generations following this ancestor must respect the taboo ad infinitum.

Thus, the Kéita have the hippopotamus for tné; the Traoré, the Dambélé, and the Warata have the panther; the Samaké, the elephant; the Koubilali of Ségou, the hippopotamus; those of Issa Ber, the m'polio [a fish]; others have the mole cricket (n'gere) and the striped mouse (n'kelika); the Niaré, Sisé, Silla, Doukouré, and the Daramé, the python, etc.

The oath: this seals a pact of dyonge fraternization. Each
621 party to the contract extracts some drops of blood from his forearm
608 which is mixed with goat's milk. Swearing by his ancestors, he states the conditions of the alliance and drinks part of the beverage. This alliance binds the parties to it and all their descendants ad infinitum. It entails a prohibition or, contrariwise, a recommendation
[582] of marriage between members of the two communities, and establishes solidarity between the two communities which owe each other mutual assistance. In the framework of this alliance is the cathartic alliance termed sénankuya, which, besides the preceding obligations, governs the system of purifications.

The sénankuya: unites certain specific groups bearing differ-
621 names within the same village, but can also have an intertribal
608 character; ex.: Mandingue-Peul. Humblot observed the following
648 alliances at K[illegible]nkan: Kéita-Fofana; Kondé-Traoré; Kéita-Béreté-Sérigou-Sissé; [56] Kala-Kéita-Kouyaté; Kourouma-Koma; Kourouma-Dabo; Kourouba-Konaté-Kamara-Bagayoko; Konaté-Dougoumoko; Konaté-Sidibé. This system of alliance in which
[788] the two allies are equal and complementary governs the mechanism of the purifications, notably by the insult, and the duties of reciprocal assistance (1). Formerly, when a sénanku was reduced to slavery,

1. M. Griaule, "L'alliance cathartique" [The Cathartic Alliance], Africa, Vol. XVIII, 1948.

584

1. The Marriage Proposal (1)

1. The procedures described here apply to the marriage of a young girl. For widows or divorcées who remarry, there are consultations of diviners, sacrifices to the evil fetishes, etc., but the betrothal and wedding ceremonies are performed with a minimum of show.

582 581 The Bambara are not unmoved by the beauty of a woman's form; they can distinguish a well-formed body from a malformed one, a pretty woman from an ugly one, and they find a coppery skin more attractive than one of ebony black. Similarly, a face pitted by smallpox or a bosom covered with scars displeases them, and a man talks to you about his fiancée or his wife, he is quite proud to be able to say: "sien si t'a la, she has a body without blemish," therefore she is beautiful. When it comes to marriage, however, he does not look too closely! He readily keeps silent about his tastes and seldom consults his heart, for a wife to him is primarily a source of pleasure and profit. -/200/

581 What he sees in a woman above all is a being of a different sex than he, and if she is industrious, cooks well, and is good at business, he will know how to close his eyes to her defects in order to keep her and allow her to be an important person in his home who must be reckoned with.

582 When a Negro who wants a wife finds an unbetrothed girl, he quickly confides his secret, his fears and hopes, to his close friend, a man of mature age who enjoys some respect in the country (1). The

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1. Some people have thought that the "storytellers /griots/" act as intermediaries in asking the hand of a child. Nothing is more